

AMERICAN

NOVEMBER • 1968

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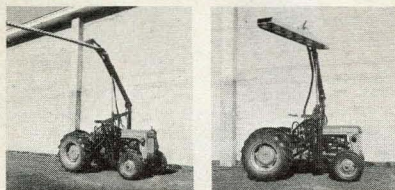
# Fruit Grower





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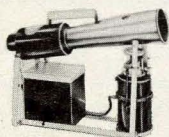


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# ON THE LABOR FRONT

Despite its degree of success or failure, the fresh table grape boycott has made an impact on agriculture

**F**OUR years ago, United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC), AFL-CIO, undertook unionizing farm workers. The grape picker in Delano, Calif., became the "test" case. Early this summer, UFWOC called for a boycott against fresh table grapes grown in vineyards where workers were not unionized, to force growers to accept the union. The boycott spread across the country, becoming a political as well as a moral issue. There are about 70 grape growers in Delano who are remaining steadfast during the controversy.

If the grape growers refuse to give in to the union and its harassment, the boycott, as a weapon, will be finished. But if the growers give in, then all agricultural products touched or moved by a non-union worker would be in jeopardy.

In effect, this is what the fruit, vegetable, and farming industries are saying about the harassment aimed at a handful of growers in Delano, even though all California fresh table grapes are affected by the boycott.

"The implications of the success of the grape boycott are vast," says Ralph Bunje, manager, California Canning Peach Association. "The most serious implication is that any organized group from a church, a woman's club, a labor union, any kind of an association, can suddenly decide, with no facts to support the case other than those which are supplied in a self-serving manner by the organizers, that the peach growers in California, or the citrus growers in Florida or the cranberry growers in New England, are unfair to something. Then the group stops the products from moving to the marketplace. This is just what has happened to grapes in New York. Serious? You bet it is serious!"

Farmers of any kind cannot afford to be placed at the mercy of a union at harvesttime, says Myron B. McFarland, Jr., secretary, South Central (California) Farmers Committee.

The California Grape and Tree Fruit League has spent thousands of dollars for newspaper ads appearing in the major boycott target areas denouncing

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the statements made by UFWOC which also purchased advertising for its boycott endeavor.

The league states in one ad to consumers: "The legality of such boycotts is questionable, and certainly it is contrary to the American tradition of open access to markets for all commodities. This is your food supply. Today it is grapes, tomorrow it could be meat, bread, or potatoes. Protect your right to a plentiful supply of fresh healthful food."

And, says Charles B. Shuman, president, American Farm Bureau Federation: "Boycotts of food products could destroy the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of farm families and farm workers whose total annual income is tied up in the once-a-year harvest. If the grape boycott is successful, this vicious device could be extended to all farm crops . . ."

#### Consider Some of the Facts

If the union is focusing attention on the grape workers and growers in the Delano area, then growers in other states should take notice:

1) Not only grape pickers in Delano, but workers in other areas of the state are the *highest paid* farm workers in the nation — averaging earnings that long have exceeded the minimum hourly wage set by Congress for industrial workers.

2) Delano grape workers, as are all California agricultural workers, are covered by *more* protective laws, including workmen's compensation and disability insurance, than workers in any other state.

3) Fully 90% of the grape pickers in Delano, even at peak harvest, are *residents* of the area, not, as the union claims, "destitute, miserably housed, hungry migrants."

And the workers themselves formed a freedom-to-work organization to combat union intervention.

#### The Boycott Goes On

If California's laws for agricultural employees are so stringent, and the growers and workers in Delano are standing fast, why has the boycott grown to national proportions? Perhaps the union is trying to "break the strong" in order to "better manipulate the weak." Whatever the answer, growers in other states are on guard. Fruit, vegetable, and general farming organizations and industries are supporting the handful of Delano growers to tell the public about the worker-grower side of the story. However, the boycott continues.

The end result will not be the win or loss for a grower or UFWOC, but the availability of a great nation's food supply.

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